

Christmas Tree Safety

Indoor Christmas trees and fire prevention.

1 Caring for your freshly cut tree.

- ☐ **Select the freshest-looking tree available.** To test for freshness, gently grasp a branch between your thumb and forefinger and pull it toward you. Very few needles should come off in your hand. Shake or bounce the tree on its stump. You should not see an excessive amount of green needles fall to the ground. Some loss of interior brown needles is normal.
- ☐ **Water that tree.** If not setting up right away, store the tree in water and out of the sun and wind. Make a fresh cut off the bottom of the trunk one half inch from the bottom just before putting in the stand. **Don't add anything to the tree's water.** Research has shown that plain tap water is by far the best. Some commercial additives and home concoctions can actually be detrimental to a tree's moisture retention and increase needle loss. Keep the tree's stand full of water at all times, checking the water level daily. The stand you use should hold at least one quart of water for every inch diameter of the trunk after the tree is in the stand.

2 Protect your tree from fire hazards—whether your tree is real or artificial.

- ☐ Place the Christmas tree well away from heat registers, space heaters, fire places, wood stoves, televisions, computer monitors and other heat sources. These will speed up evaporation and moisture loss of the tree
- ☐ When decorating Christmas trees, always use safe tree lights. (Some lights are designed only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.) Larger tree lights should also have some type of reflector rather than a bare bulb and all lights should be listed by a testing laboratory.
- ☐ Never use electric lights on a metal tree.
- ☐ Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use tree lights. Any string of lights with worn, frayed or broken cords or loose bulb connections should not be used.
- ☐ Always unplug Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to sleep.
- ☐ Never use lit candles to decorate a tree.
- ☐ Choose a sturdy tree stand designed not to tip over.
- ☐ When purchasing an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled as fire-retardant.
- ☐ Children are fascinated with Christmas trees. Keep a watchful eye on them when around the tree and do not let them play with the wiring or lights.
- ☐ Store matches and lighters out of sight and reach of children, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- ☐ Safely dispose of the tree when it begins dropping needles. Dried-out trees are highly flammable and should not be left in a house or garage, or placed against the house.

3 Be Prepared—Know what to do in Case of Fire

- ☐ **Residential Fire Sprinklers** – Offer the best protection to ensure escape from the fire. Consider installing them in your home.
- ☐ **Install Smoke Alarms** – on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas.
- ☐ **Make and Practice a Home Escape Plan** – Make an emergency escape plan with your family. Be sure to have two ways out of every room. Decide on a designated meeting place outside.
- ☐ **Get Out and Stay Out** -- Go directly to your planned meeting place and stay there. Call the fire department from a neighbor's home or a cellular phone once safely outside. If you think someone is trapped inside, notify the fire department.
- ☐ **Crawl Low in Smoke.** – If you are trapped in smoke, get down on your hands and knees and crawl to the nearest safe way out. Smoke and toxic fumes rise, cleaner air is near the floor.
- ☐ **Stop, Drop and Roll** -- If your clothes catch on fire, do not run, stop where you are, drop to the ground, and roll over and over to smother the flames.
- ☐ Hold a fire drill and practice your plan annually.